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STATE FOR NOAA JACK DUNNIGAN

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TAGS: [TPHY](#) [SCUL](#) [UNESCO](#)
SUBJECT: GROUP ONE MEETING 20 MAY 2009

¶1. Summary: The May 20 meeting of UNESCO's regional electoral Group I (Western Europe and North America) laid bare some of the horse-trading that occurs in obtaining seats connected to the various committees, commissions, and Conventions at UNESCO. Italy proposed that Group I trade with Group II (Russia and Eastern Europe) a seat on Inter-governmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) Executive Council for a seat on the treaty body of the 2005 Convention on the Protection of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. The U.S. blocked consensus on the idea at this meeting, but Canada and others argued that Group I will eventually have to deal with Group II's demand for more seats on the IOC Executive Council. End summary.

¶2. The key issue during the Group I meeting centered on the ASPAC - Asia Pacific Electoral Group's - request via letter to the Director-General through the ADG for Culture, Francoise Riviere, for Group I to "return" a seat on the Cultural Diversity Convention's treaty body that had been "loaned" for two years to Group I. The Convention allocates three seats to each group. Group I currently has five seats on the Convention's Committee.

¶3. Complicating the matter was a letter from Group II asking that the Director-General find a way to increase the number of seats Group II has on the IOC Executive Council. (Note: Group II now has two seats on the Council, compared to 11 seats for Group I. End note).

¶4. The meeting Chair, Italian Ambassador Giuseppe Moscato, asked Group I members how he should respond to the ASPAC letter, saying that he anticipated a possible battle with the Indian ambassador if there were any problems concerning the request. France's ambassador, Ms. Colonna, said that Group I must return the seat, adding that it would be in the Group's "political interest," and its only chance to get seats in the future.

¶5. Moscato announced that he would circulate a draft reply to the D-G through Ms. Riviere saying that the Group had "taken note" of ASPAC's letter, while opening a discussion with the ASPAC Group's chairman to see what other options might be possible in a wider seat swapping arrangement.

¶6. Regarding the IOC, Moscato observed that Group I now has 11 seats, and only 10 candidates, making it appear to be a simple decision to use the extra seat for trading to other Groups. He added that, given the need for the General Conference to change the IOC's rules of procedure to accommodate such a shift of seats, the redivision of seats could not take effect until after the 36th session of the General Conference in 2011. However, the U.S. Charge, Stephen Engelken, told the Group that he would not join in consensus to resolve the seat swaps without instruction from Washington. He told the Group that "any decision about giving up seats on the IOC must be determined based on what is best for the IOC." Engelken added that while we have a large number of seats, it is important to note that Group I's contribution to IOC (both financial and in terms of expertise) is also disproportionately high. Finally, he stressed that the U.S. is not a party to the Cultural Diversity Convention and that the U.S. is therefore not interested in whether or not Group I obtains more seats on its

treaty body.

¶17. The Italian Chair appealed to the Group to "see reality." Group II will continue to press to rectify the imbalance of seats on the IOC Executive Council. Canadian Ambassador Laurin said that if we don't find a solution, e.g. giving up one of the 11 IOC seats in order to gain a seat for Cultural Diversity, we will probably find ourselves in a situation later where an ad-hoc committee will impose a decision on the Group that might be worse. We could lose more than one seat, and not get anything for it from the other Groups.

¶18. Norway intervened, saying that the current seat quotas regarding IOC are not fair, and agreed that we risk losing more than one of our 11 seats. Turkey said that the Group should negotiate now, or potentially lose control of things during the General Conference.

¶19. Things were left in the hands of Ambassador Moscato for the moment. We anticipate he will raise this issue again before the IOC Executive Council meeting later in June.

ENGELKEN